

**"ABE" LINCOLN'S  
ANECDOTES  
AND STORIES**

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"Abe" Lincoln's Anecdotes and Stories by R. D. Wordsworth

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**R. D. WORDSWORTH**

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ANECDOTES  
AND STORIES**



# **"Abe" Lincoln's**

## **Anecdotes and Stories**

A COLLECTION OF THE BEST  
STORIES TOLD BY LINCOLN  
WHICH MADE HIM FAMOUS AS

**AMERICA'S BEST STORY TELLER**

Compiled by

**R. D. WORDSWORTH**

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# **"ABE" LINCOLN'S**

## **ANECDOTES AND STORIES**



### **A FUN-LOVING AND HUMOR-LOVING MAN**

It was once said of Shakespeare that the great mind that conceived the tragedies of "Hamlet," "Macbeth," etc., would have lost its reason if it had not found vent in the sparkling humor of such comedies as "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and "The Comedy of Errors."

The great strain on the mind of Abraham Lincoln produced by four years of civil war might likewise have overcome his reason had it not found vent in the yarns and stories he constantly told. No more fun-loving or humor-loving man than Abraham Lincoln ever lived. He enjoyed a joke even when it was on himself, and probably, while he got his greatest enjoyment from telling stories, he had a keen appreciation of the humor in those that were told him.

### **MATRIMONIAL ADVICE**

For a while during the Civil War, General Fremont was without a command. One day in discussing Fremont's case with George W. Julian, President Lincoln said he did not know where to place him, and that it reminded him of the old man who advised his son to take a wife, to which the young man responded: "All right; whose wife shall I take?"

**A SLOW HORSE**

On one occasion when Mr. Lincoln was going to attend a political convention one of his rivals, a liveryman, provided him with a slow horse, hoping that he would not reach his destination in time. Mr. Lincoln got there, however, and when he returned with the horse he said: "You keep this horse for funerals, don't you?" "Oh, no," replied the liveryman. "Well, I'm glad of that, for if you did you'd never get a corpse to the grave in time for the resurrection."

**A VAIN GENERAL**

In an interview between President Lincoln and Petroleum V. Nasby, the name came up of a recently deceased politician of Illinois whose merit was blemished by great vanity. His funeral was very largely attended.

"If General —— had known how big a funeral he would have had," said Mr. Lincoln, "he would have died years ago."

**HAD CONFIDENCE IN HIM—"BUT"—**

"General Blank asks for more men," said Secretary of War Stanton to the President one day, showing the latter a telegram from the commander named, appealing for re-enforcements.

"I guess he's killed off enough men, hasn't he?" queried the President. "I don't mean Confederates—our own men. What's the use in sending volunteers down to him if they're only used to fill graves?"

"His dispatch seems to imply that, in his opinion, you have not the confidence in him he thinks he deserves," the War Secretary went on to say, as he looked over the telegram again.

"Oh," was the President's reply, "he needn't lose any of his sleep on that account. Just telegraph him



to that effect; also, that I don't propose to send him any more men."

#### **HARDTACK BETTER THAN GENERALS**

Secretary of War Stanton told the President the following story, which greatly amused the latter, as he was especially fond of a joke at the expense of some high military or civil dignitary.

Stanton had little or no sense of humor.

When Secretary Stanton was making a trip up the Broad River in North Carolina, in a tugboat, a Federal picket yelled out, "What have you got on board of that tug?"

The severe and dignified answer was, "The Secretary of War and Major-General Foster."

Instantly the picket roared back, "We've got major-generals enough up here. Why don't you bring us up some hardtack?"

#### **DOUGLAS HELD LINCOLN'S HAT**

When Mr. Lincoln delivered his first inaugural he was introduced by his friend, United States Senator E. D. Baker, of Oregon. He carried a cane and a little roll—the manuscript of his inaugural address. There was a moment's pause after the introduction, as he vainly looked for a spot where he might place his high silk hat.

Stephen A. Douglas, the political antagonist of his whole public life, the man who had pressed him hardest in the campaign of 1860, was seated just behind him. Douglas stepped forward quickly, and took the hat which Mr. Lincoln held helplessly in his hand.

"If I can't be President," Douglas whispered smilingly to Mrs. Brown, a cousin of Mrs. Lincoln and a member of the President's party, "I at least can hold his hat."

**HIS PASSES TO RICHMOND NOT HONORED**

A man called upon the President and solicited a pass for Richmond.

"Well," said the President, "I would be very happy to oblige, if my passes were respected; but the fact is, sir, I have, within the past two years, given passes to two hundred and fifty thousand men to go to Richmond, and not one has got there yet."

The applicant quietly and respectfully withdrew on his tiptoes.

**LINCOLN AS A DANCER**

Lincoln made his first appearance in society when he was first sent to Springfield, Ill., as a member of the State Legislature. It was not an imposing figure which he cut in a ballroom, but still he was occasionally to be found there. Miss Mary Todd, who afterward became his wife, was the magnet which drew the tall, awkward young man from his den. One evening Lincoln approached Miss Todd, and said, in his peculiar idiom:

"Miss Todd, I should like to dance with you the worst way."

The young woman accepted the inevitable, and hobbled around the room with him. When she returned to her seat, one of her companions asked mischievously:

"Well, Mary, did he dance with you the worst way?"

"Yes," she answered, "the very worst."

**LOVED SOLDIERS' HUMOR**

Lincoln loved anything that savored of wit or humor among the soldiers. He used to relate two stories to show, he said, that neither death nor danger could quench the grim humor of the American soldier:

"A soldier of the Army of the Potomac was being carried to the rear of battle with both legs shot off, who,

seeing a pie-woman, called out, 'Say, old lady, are them pies sewed or pegged?'

"And there was another one of the soldiers at the battle of Chancellorsville, whose regiment, waiting to be called into the fight, was taking coffee. The hero of the story put to his lips a crockery mug which he had carried with care through several campaigns. A stray bullet, just missing the drinker's head, dashed the mug into fragments and left only the handle on his finger. Turning his head in that direction, he scowled, 'Johnny, you can't do that again!'"

#### **WANTED TO "BORROW" THE ARMY**

During one of the periods when things were at a standstill, the Washington authorities, being unable to force General McClellan to assume an aggressive attitude, President Lincoln went to the general's headquarters to have a talk with him, but for some reason he was unable to get an audience.

Mr. Lincoln returned to the White House much disturbed at his failure to see the commander of the Union forces, and immediately sent for two general officers, to have a consultation. On their arrival, he told them he must have some one to talk to about the situation, and as he had failed to see General McClellan, he wished their views as to the possibility or probability of commencing active operations with the Army of the Potomac.

"Something's got to be done," said the President, emphatically, "and done right away, or the bottom will fall out of the whole thing. Now, if McClellan doesn't want to use the army for a while, I'd like to borrow it from him and see if I can't do something or other with it.

"If McClellan can't fish, he ought at least to be cutting bait at a time like this."